

Relations in Trans-national Cultural Projects – A Narrative Approach

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Abstract

Formal regulations and pronouncements do not form the institutional life alone, they are the result of human communication and interaction. On the other hand institutions and regulations influence the relating processes and communications that arise between people. Collective sense making is taking place in national organizations, trans-national EU organizations, in different national/trans-national cultural projects and of course in the research community. The individuals and organizations making decisions about finance and goal setting make sense of their work and world in the context/reality of cultural policy and governance and art projects live in another environment. This paper focuses on speech acts that constitute standards, interpretations/translations and actions of an official institution – Culture2000 – and a trans national art project funded by this institution.

Keywords

Trans- national art projects, relational perspective, cultural policy, translation

Background

For centuries, artistic and cultural exchange have ignored national frontiers and language barriers, and have helped to surmount divides and heal the wounds inflicted by the bloodiest conflicts.¹

Cultural policy has changed in recent years due to new institutions in society such as globalization, networks, cultural industry and an increasing instrumental (and economical) view on art and culture (Caust 2003, Mitchell 2003). Cultural policy making has also been inspired by the ideas of New Public Management that includes e.g. the adoption of business accounting and auditing methods. More or less new organizations and actors have entered the cultural policy scene during the last twenty years such as a growing third sector, foundations and trans-national organizations like the European Union, which means new networks have been built (Cliche et al 2002, Miller 2002).

The European Union has formulated an over all “cultural policy” which among other things states that: “Action by the Community shall be aimed at encouraging cooperation between Member States and, if necessary, supporting and supplementing their action...” (Article 151:2, Amsterdam Treaty). One means of encouraging this kind of cultural cooperation between EU member states is the Culture2000 programme. The aim of the program is to support cooperative art projects with artists, cultural actors or cultural organizations from several EU-member countries. This kind of directed money is an incentive for building new networks and co-operations across national and cultural borders. Swedish culture organizations have not been the most frequent appliers from Culture2000 but have still every year, since the start in 2000 got

subsidies for different projects, either as main organizer or co-organizer. One such project that included several of the applicant states for EU-membership in 2002 and the Nordic countries was Network Baltic. It is organized by Grafikens hus a centre for fine arts printmaking in the royal barns of a castle, west of Stockholm. This paper examines how this project, including the application procedure, started and how the work has proceeded.

The Aim of the Paper

The aim of the study is not to evaluate neither the Network Baltic project nor the Culture2000 programme rather it is to render gathered narratives from actors in one Culture2000 project concerning; the work of the administrator at the EU Cultural Contact Point Office and of the organizer of a Culture2000 project. The main focus in this paper is on the management of the project.

The paper examines what kind of discourse and dialogues that precedes and guides the plans of the project, who is conducting the dialogues and what kind of relations this project and its networks shapes. This discourse is compared to the overall discourse in the field of cultural policy, mainly in Europe. Finally the paper ends with a discussion about how we can interpret processes of standardization and translation in a trans-national cultural project with a relational perspective.

Methods of Meaning in the Process of Constructing a Project

Even if the organisations of the cultural field (not necessarily the cultural industries), are considered to stand for higher values and a critical voice in the society, the people running the organisations and institutions have to be quite pragmatic. They deal with everyday topics like planning, co-ordinating, controlling, decision-making and evaluating i.e. traditional management work. But still the continuous contacts with artists and politicians and the ideas of values in society should influence the managerial work and the managerial assumptions in some way. The words people use and the way they talk about their work tells us something about their view of the working life. This study will focus on the narratives of both the former director of Grafikens hus, who was the person behind the application of the Network Baltic and the present director who inherited the project as well as the Swedish official of the Culture Contact Point who helped out with in the application process.

According to Czarniawska (1998) there are at least four forms in which narrative enters organisations studies: "... organizational research that is written in a storylike fashion ("tales from the field", to paraphrase Van Maanen 1998); organizational research that collects organizational stories (tales of the field); organizational research that conceptualizes organizational life as story making and organization theory as story reading (interpretative approaches); and a disciplinary reflection that takes the form of literary critique".² In this paper the second form is most emergent. By gathering and interpreting the stories of different persons concerning the application process and the realisation of the project we can learn about the actors actions and sense-making of the project. Different persons of course describe the same situation in different ways. It is important to remember that there is hardly one ultimate way of narrating a specific situation, happening or process. What these stories can tell is how different persons made sense of the situation or how they infuse their experiences with meaning. This meaning also have an implication on how people deal with situations, how they relate to others

and what actions are taken. The researcher studies these stories and make interpretations that hopefully will give both the readers and the narrators a new or at least different insight of the situation or the process i.e. seeing a familiar situation from a slightly different perspective. In line with Ricoeur's work on hermeneutics I treat the narratives as a text and as such it can be interpreted without being true to the intentions of the narrator since the story is once more being created in the mind of the reader. Or in Ricoeur's words the text is an action in itself (Ricoeur 1993). By taking a distanced, reflective and critical standpoint to the narratives it is possible to communicate or discuss the stories by both explanation and understanding. In order to be able to interpret and communicate with the narrative you have to be able to understand its context. In this particular case the context constitutes the cultural policy of the European Union and its Culture2000 project, the national political organisations and national cultural policy of the application countries as well as the members of the Network Baltic project, especially the main organizer.

The Structure of EU Culture2000

The Culture2000 programme was launched in the year 2000 as a follower to earlier cultural programmes such as the Kaleidoscope, Ariane and Raphael, supporting cultural projects in the areas of the performance and visual arts, reading and literature and heritage. The European Union was originally built on the ideas of a common market and free movement of people, goods, services and capital within the union. Cultural policy was not supposed to be a task for the EU according to the constitution. Each member state should develop and preserve their own cultural and national identity. This was changed in the Maastricht Treaty of 1993 and further developed in the Amsterdam Treaty, where culture was incorporated in Article 151, which in the two first paragraphs states:

1. The Community shall contribute to the flowering of the cultures of the Member States, while respecting their national and regional diversity and at the same time bringing the common cultural heritage to the fore.
2. Action by the Community shall be aimed at encouraging cooperation between Member States and, if necessary, supporting and supplementing their action...³

In 1997 the Council of Europe published its report "In from the margins", on the role of culture and development in Europe, as a complement to the UNESCO report "Our Creative Diversity". The European report wanted to point out the importance of bringing both cultural policy and the dispossessed and disadvantaged Europeans in from the margins. The treaty, the report and continuous discussions in the Commission and among the EU members contributed to the launching of the new five year culture programme – Culture2000, that was supposed to be more efficient than the earlier ones. The idea was to encourage bigger projects that were more perceptible, that should lead to continuous co-operations, had an obvious European dimension with an enlarged European participation and finally the projects should include cultural agents from several European countries⁴. The total budget for the programme was set to 167 million Euros and has so far co-funded more than 700 cultural cooperation projects. The Culture2000 programme has been extended to 2006 with an extended budget of Euro 70 millions, while the commission is planning a new cultural programme for the EU⁵. The program is open for all kinds of cultural projects except film, TV and video⁶. Culture2000 had priority areas such as visual art in 2002, performance art in 2003 and cultural heritage in 2004 but the forth coming years will be open to all kinds of cultural projects. In the year 2002 twelve Swedish projects got funding from Culture2000 out of 221 projects in total.

The aim of the programme is: "...to develop a common cultural area by promoting cultural dialogue, knowledge of the history, creation and dissemination of culture, the mobility of artists and their works, European cultural heritage, new forms of cultural expression and the socio-economic role of culture. "Culture2000" supports trans-national cooperation projects which involve cooperation between creative artists, cultural operators and the cultural institutions of the countries participating in the programme."⁷ This means that in order to get funding from the programme at least three member countries should be part of a one year project and five countries in a two–three year project. The programme is implemented by the commission, assisted by an advisory committee and each member state can apply for financial assistance to open a Cultural Contact Point office that promotes the programme, gives information about dead-lines and is assisting in the application process. In Sweden the Cultural Contact Point is run by The National Council of Cultural Affairs and the National Heritage Board.

The art projects that get funding from Culture2000 have gone through a thorough and long process of selection. When the applications arrive to the Culture2000 committee in the commission they are selected and neglected according to the quality of the application. If it is complete it is put in the "pre-selected" pile otherwise it is refused. The pre-selected pile is split up and the projects are ranked by secret juries according to the criteria in the application guidelines and the goals of Culture2000. The projects get certain points for every fulfilled criteria and the projects that score highest get "selected" and the ones below the line will be "not-selected". The jury members are selected by the cultural ministries of the member states and jury members are not supposed to favour projects from their own countries. The discussions and the substratum for decisions made are not official.

Network Baltic a Culture2000 Project

Network Baltic became a Culture2000 project in 2002. This year the priority area was visual art and Grafikens hus, a centre for workshops and exhibitions in graphic arts had already been focusing on an increased international co-operation for some time. They sent in the application as the key organizers in November 2001. The key objectives of the project were: 1. To build a long term, dynamic, international network of artists and art institutions in the Baltic region using graphic arts as a common denominator. 2. To encourage a deeper co-operation between the arts and the business sector. 3. To contribute to the integration process of the new candidate countries within the European Community through an intense and broadly based exchange of artistic activities. 4. To approach and implement strategic methods such as; seminars, workshops, exhibitions (physical and virtual) publications and awards –supported by the website www.networkbaltic.net. (Network Baltic p 6.)

The co-organizers of the project where Art Academies from Estonia, Finland, Norway and Poland and the other partner and artists contributing to the project came from all Baltic countries including Norway, i.e. ten countries.

Network Baltic was chosen as one of approximately 12 other long-term projects in the field of visual art that year. Below the shortened narratives of three actors that have had a part in the fulfilling of the project are presented; the applicant, the project leader and the Cultural Contact Point official.

The Applicant

The former direktor of Grafikens Hus (GH) was one of the founders, the first project leader and main applicant of the Network Baltic project. He moved on to other projects after the first year of Network Baltic. The idea of GH was born in a lighter that was rebuild to a restaurant, club, gallery and meeting place for art & business. They were fifteen people with different professions and backgrounds who ran the project of turning the old barn of a castle and portrait museum into a centre for fine art print making.

“It was built in a spirit of trust without prestige. There were never any long discussions, or conflicts. There were never any obstacles on the road. The only thing was the National Heritage Board who had some thoughts about the barn. You know, a barn, is a barn, is a barn and a rose, is a rose, is a rose. That is the only thing I can remember. There was never anybody who questioned the project, neither internally nor externally. Our main aim was to nurture and develop the creative capital...”

The centre was turned into a joint stock company, where artist could buy shares with graphic art and the capital put into the company was raised with art works of a famous Swedish artist. After a couple of years GH got an award for the best co-operation with the business sector, i.e. a sponsor agreement and the director got an award from the business sector as the Project Leader of the year. Among the people in the jury were representatives from the big Swedish companies like Volvo and Ericsson.

According to the former director the difficult part is to run the activities and to get the finances together. “You need both entrepreneurship, something new and running the everyday life.” After seven years he felt that he was walking in his own footsteps and the circle was closed.

“So, the last thing I did for GH was the EU Culture2000 application. Only the fact that we made a complete application was an achievement. We wrote it in one month – which of course is not possible. But we had all the ideas and the concept almost all set. Our original vision was to be an international centre for graphic art. And becoming a Swedish centre was done quite fast by building up the biggest collection of contemporary Swedish graphics in Sweden. But – we had sketches on the internationalisation. To begin with we focused on the Baltic area and Northern Europe. And we had already made some contacts in the business area for funding... And then this opportunity with the Culture2000 focusing on visual art in 2002 came up. ... It was announced late, as usually when it comes to EU. They are late when it comes to announcing the project and extremely late when it comes to selection of projects... Our board made a decision in August that we could go into the application process. And we got a lot of help from the official at the Culture Contact Point office. He was unbelievably supportive, helpful and competent.”

The deadline of the application was in November according to the applicant. And they worked day and night to establish the necessary contacts.

“Of course in some extent you adapt a project – or to fit it into the criteria at least you polish it a bit. But that is not the reason you are doing it. And it was not made easier with ten countries involved –three countries would have been enough according to the Culture2000. But our basic idea was to cover the whole area and we kept to that idea...”

The big challenge was to find partners and associated partners in the other countries, but thanks to a good national network with artists and people knowing other people they succeeded.

In two days and nights a courier was sent to the four associate partners to get their signatures. And after waiting for several months after the project had started they got the answer from Brussels that they had got funding – about 6 million Swedish crowns (approximately 650 000 Euros). Then the second challenge was raised. The total budget was 10 million crowns, the associate partners put up with 2 millions together and...

“We missed out this thing. We were very naïve. We thought that if we had succeeded in bringing home this big EU-project – maybe even one of the biggest cultural projects in Sweden – then the state, the community and everybody else would shout hurray and tell us this is fantastic. If you have succeeded in bringing in 60% and you only have to finance 20% we will of course support this. But no way! Not a single nickel! ... Coming from the business sector I am really astonished that the EU is so generous – that they do not demand – they did not ask about guarantees of our own financing of the project. I have spoken to people from the commission after this and they have obviously changed this procedure now... And I think it is inevitable that the state should contribute to a project that has passed the EU evaluation. There is so much work done on the application and the projects are extremely well planned...”

The project started and all participants were very positive and eager to take part. The idea was to have one annual workshop at GH.

“At the first workshop we invited the responsible principal from each partner institution. In order for all to be co-creators of the network and construct a frame or a structure for the project, it is important to be together for a couple of days. At the same time there was an artist from each country present who worked. That was a returning theme, to have ten artist working in the workshop together. Then the structure and the frame was lead and – because we did not get any additional subsidies from the state, (the ones that helped us out was actually the county and the local municipality) the project was diminished. But after that it has worked out quite well and now the final exhibition is touring. There were slightly different ideas about the final exhibition. Finally we had a competition – which probably is a hair raising experience for certain people in the art field. The Laureate artists for the final exhibition, one from each country, were chosen by the other countries almost like in the Eurovision song contest. But it really worked out fine according to our artistic leader!”

The applicant / former director goes on to talk about how the network has given the artists new possibilities and new contacts and that it would be great to take the exhibition to Brussels. He is also concerned about how to continue the network when the Culture2000 project is finished and what role GH can play in the network in the future.

“But in one way we will have a role. We made an issue of new shares for foreign artists (about 200 shares) and many of the young artist have agreed to become shareholders paying with art – three graphic art works! And many artists have returned and will return in the future. They think it has been fantastic to come here!”

... The Project Leader

The project leader inherited the project when he became the new director of GH. He points out that it is the applicant who is the brain and the inspiration behind the project. The project leader

also thinks all the objectives of the network have been fulfilled except “To encourage a deeper co-operation between the arts and the business sector.” This has proven to be quite difficult.

“The people that come to see the art on the opening of the exhibition are not interested in these things. And the project has really been more process-oriented and rather internal to its character. So this topic was not really well suited for this kind of project – even if we did dream about it. But the project has not had that kind of nature that attracts business managers either...”

But in all other respects he thought that the project was successful. And he was very glad when the person who helped out with the exhibition in Helsinki said that this was the first project he had seen that actually had developed a real network.

“It is hard to actually grasp and when you are “the spider in the net” or the inspiration you want to emphasize it even more. But there has actually been about 150 artists taking part in the project. And approximately about 50 persons from the administrative part of the partner institutions. So lets say 200 people have been in some sort of contact with us. And in the future I am sure we will continue to work with some of the Network Baltic partner institutions – but maybe not all of them.”

The project leader found the project and the description in the application to be rather theoretical. And both the initial project leader and the artistic leader wanted to see Network Baltic as an Academy. And it has actually been a process of learning for all parts, both the administration and the artists.

“As I see it the theoretical view of the project really seemed to be there for the EU application. It was like copying the conditions that have to be fulfilled in order to get funding. And maybe that is one reason why it really got a “yes. And of course this is not anything new projects generally look that way...”

I think this is a process-oriented project into which we have had to grow into. When I and the artistic leader started to work together we had to sit down for three days in order to make this project our own. And we had of course the application to keep to, and there were really, really small possibilities to develop the frames of the project, both economically and in respect to what the application said we should do. So in the end we really had to make the EU satisfied and do exactly the things that were stated in the application and it had to cost exactly as much as was said in the application. This was the overall objective with the project. And I found that rather difficult to handle.”

The project leader had preferred to see Network Baltic as process rather than a project. The frames of the project were rather solid and there was little space for improvisation although he somehow had to create that space – “when you can feel it in your body that this idea will work”, as he put it. What the project leader perhaps value most in the project is the international contacts and co-operation that has been established. It all was accentuated when the Swedish foreign minister was killed, while he was in Latvia. In the catalogue he writes:

“We discussed this a lot and saw Lindh as a symbol for the movement of the new Europe. Anna Lindh had a very positive view of the potential of a Europe without borders and she was very interested in the people. Sadly, perhaps part of the new open-minded Sweden died with Anna Lindh. Nowadays, some people see more problems than opportunities with an expanded Europe, but one thing I know for sure is that the expanded Europe movement is underway and I am excited to be part of its development.” (p 8.)

The economic situation of the Network Baltic project has been a big problem for GH. They had to take loans while they were waiting for the EU money that is paid in different turns, and The National Council for Cultural Affairs did not contribute to the project.

“When I at last managed to tell the EU-crew that we did not have all the money we needed for the project they were not very pleased, since their money had already been locked into our project and there were other projects that could have benefited from that money. Well, there was little they could say anyway.”

The contacts with the officials at the Culture2000 office in Brussels have worked alright, according to the project leader but...

“Well the obvious question to me is, in such a big project like this really is; have you met them, have you looked at the project together and gone through the plans for it? I think I would have preferred that from the beginning. Maybe there even would have been an interest to visit us and have a look at our workshops?! On the other hand the contacts have been quite ok and when we really needed it, they even adjusted their rigorous frames a bit. But their relationship to the written reports have been quite clinical, which really surprised me. All these long texts I have written about what we have done and how – and then there has just been an official statement on what kind of money we have got or not. What the bill looks like! Almost a technical relation to the evaluation of the project!... Sometimes, when I needed somebody to talk to I have called the official at the CCP office. Even if his work really is to help out with sending in the applications, he has been very helpful to me and given information about how to rig the EU.”

...and the Cultural Contact Point Official

The Swedish contact person for EU Culture2000 explains what his obligations are.

“The task of the Cultural Contact Point (CCP) is to inform about the existence of the Culture2000 and its stipulations so that all cultural agents that have a possibility to apply for foundation know about it. They need to know when it is announced and that they can get help from us when they work with their application – so called *technical assistance*.”

He continues to explain that in Sweden the big institutions like the National Gallery or the Museum of Modern Art have not been the ones applying for money from Culture2000. It has rather been small institutions with a limited amount of both people and money that applies. In the year 2002 about 30 Swedish project applied for funding from the EU and twelve got funding out of which five where book translations and the others art projects.

“The most intense and detailed work at the CCP is when an organizer works with the application in the final phase – then we read through the application forms with them. (Which we can do in an earlier phase as well). We tell them what kind of problems there are and what is important to think about. If they have come to a point when it is time to send in the application we can arrange a meeting with them to see that everything is under control. But we do not write the application for them and we do not count the budget. The case of GH was a good example of what this process can look like. The contact the applicants have with us differs a lot.”

The most usual problem in an application is that it has not an obvious European dimension. This is also one of the reasons that the obligations of the co-organizer in the Culture2000 program has been strengthened. In the former programs, Kalejdoskop, Ariane and Raphael the commission feared that the art projects actually were national projects that had been disguised into European projects with 'sleeping partners' just lending out their signature. In order to prevent this certain steps have been taken:

“ ...gradually during Culture2000 they have through certain measures, regulations, prescriptions, checks and controls, seen to it that the projects really are genuine co operations with a European dimension – or as they put it has a “European additional value”. One such measure they introduced a couple of years ago was that every co organiser should not only sign the application but also guarantee that they will contribute financially to the project. And the commission checks out if they really have these possibilities ... and there are other controls like describing the role of the co organisers. That is of course difficult if there is not a genuine base or idea.
... Another important feature of the application is that the budget is balanced. Sometimes you can complete it later, – I think GH got that opportunity?!”

When the application has passed the first thinning out the jury gets to work. The most important criteria the jury considers are the quality of the project, the European additional value and its creative and innovative dimension.

“...and then there is a criteria which we at the National Council for Cultural Affairs actually do not think has anything to do with the quality of the project, rather it is about the quality of the applicant. It is about whether the applicants have the competence and the resources to complete the project or not. And of course it is difficult for the jury to know if – lets say GH has the competence that is needed!”

The jury is secret as long as the process of selection is running and after that one can find information about the members of the jury on the website. Even if the jury is not supposed to tell anything about what has been said during the meetings, which can last for 3-4 days, it happens that the CCP-officials can get some information out of them. The Swedish official says “We do not put a pressure on them, but we do talk to them and ask for as many details as possible.”

The officials of all the CCP-offices meet annually at the Commission where they are briefed about “...how to bring about the messages of the commission as correctly as possible.” The Cultural Contact Point offices also have an informal meeting during every presidency, which is arranged by the national CCP-office. There are also some informal contacts between the different CCP-offices by e-mail during the year, although not so many according to the Swedish official, since all CCP offices are working nationally. But there is also a mailing-list on which there is contributions almost every day.

“We ask questions of each other when we are uncertain about different conditions. Actually we should ask from the commission, but you do not always get an answer from there.”

The Swedish state has not been too interested in the different EU-projects when it comes to funding. The Culture2000 covers 60% of the total costs of the project the co-organisers have to stand for 5% each and the rest is up to the main organiser to cover from other foundations or financiers. The EU-member states are supposed to cover up for the missing money. Some

states have established special foundations for EU-projects that gain funding from e.g. the Culture2000 program. This is not the case in Sweden and the Swedish CCP official states:

“As you probably know – in Finland they have a special fund at the ministry of culture and education from where the EU-projects can get supplementary funding...It is of course very important that the government take their responsibility. We do not have anything similar in Sweden... The former regime (minister of culture) was absolutely against that. They did not seem to be so enthusiastic about co-operation in the EU... You could say that the EU and Culture2000 have not influenced cultural policy noticeably in Sweden. Of the projects that got EU Culture2000 funding in 2002 some of the projects got supplementary funding from The National Council for Cultural Affairs in competition with the ordinary national projects. But as far as I can remember GH did not get any special subsidies for the EU-project. I believe they got an ordinary activity subsidy from The National Council for Cultural Affairs and they might have used parts of that for self-financing or looked for other community co-financing.

These are part of the stories from three actors/agents in a Culture2000 project.”

The Cultural Policy Praxis and Discourse

The rhetoric's and action of cultural policy in (western) Europe and especially the Nordic countries share certain similarities. According to Mitchell (2003) one can see trends in the cultural policy from the 1970s to this date. The 1970s was the “golden era” of cultural policy where the nation state was seen as the main agent – on an arms-length distance – in the cultural development and a guarantor for the national cultural heritage and the cultural avant-garde. In the 1980s there was a shift in decision making powers from central government to regional and local levels, a strong movement towards decentralization and networking. In many European countries there was also a swing towards the inducement of private funding and public-private partnerships, although this development did not get a foothold in the Nordic countries. The 1990s was the decade when New Public Management was introduced in the cultural policy field, as in many other political fields. The arts and culture were seen as “...factors of production and a contribution to employment and economic growth.”⁸ And Mitchell argues that cultural industry seems to be a big topic of cultural policy in the 21st century. Similar interpretations on an abstract level referring to slightly different years, have been made in the joint Nordic research project that resulted in the book “The Nordic Cultural Model” edited by Peter Duelund in 2003, where the Nordic cultural policy model is seen to rest upon the “architect” model of governing, referring to the Hillman-Chartrand & McCaughey model of cultural policy. In the beginning the Nordic model used a democratic view on culture in the 1960-70s resting on a humanistic conception of culture. Culture was seen as a force that counteracts the commercial powers in society. In 1985-1995 arts and cultural policy was legitimised on social and economic foundations and an instrumental view on art and culture became dominant. During this period the regions and communities got more responsibilities for the arts and culture. This resulted in an increased co-operation and inspiration between regions and communities both nationally and abroad, and the role of the state diminished. The instrumental view is further developed into an industry view on culture in the latter half of the 1990ies, together with the new public management tools of planning and auditing⁹.

In Sweden the Ministry of Culture has focused on subsidizing national cultural institutions and projects and left the international co-operation and networks to other national or trans-national

organisations, such as the Swedish Institute, SIDA and EU-funds, which also support other industries.

Mc Guigan argues that the cultural policy discourse has circled around three ideological ideas that “function in some sense to define ‘the real world’ of culture”.¹⁰ These are stating, marketizing and communicating. These discourses can be traced in the practice of the cultural policy in the Nordic countries as well and can be compared with the trends given account for above. Communicating is perhaps the discourse that lies closest to the hearts of many artists. The communicative discourse is concerned with “...the conditions for democratic communications, culture and policy.”¹¹ This discourse is focusing on the public sphere, civil society and the life-world opposed to systems, instrumental rationality and strategic pursuits of predefined goals, i.e. the instrumentalization of culture. Habermas’ idea about the life-world being colonized by the system and instrumental reasoning is relevant to explain why so many interested in arts and culture prefer not to talk about cultural policy, according to Mc Guigan. Artists who in a creative way want to investigate, describe, question, develop, etc the way we live our lives probably feel trapped and exploited by the other discourses of cultural policy. Maybe one could say that the overall ideology and goals of cultural policy: to promote creativity, cultural diversity, democracy, access to and participation in cultural life and the forming of identities, fit well into the communicative discourse while their implementation is done through the other discourses.

Discursive Practices

The stories rendered above are examples of speech acts that construct an understanding of the situations and actions that have been taken or not taken¹². This understanding should be seen as an ongoing process rather than an establishment of the “truth”. It is quite easy to find traces from the official discourse about the role of the state, the market and viewing art as communicative action. It is quite easy to observe the ideas of new public management when it comes to planning and reporting a project and applying for money. The economical and political instrumentalization of culture is also present in the stories. The objective of building bridges between art and business is a typical discourse and ideology of the late 1990ies, which also was a part of this project. The most startling aspect of these stories is both their similarities and differences. All three actors talk about the same project, are using pretty much the same words, but from different perspectives, in different contexts constructing different “realities”. The applicant is the entrepreneur whose main focus was to build a vision about a grand idea and get the money to realize it, the project leader had to fulfil the ideas that was not his from the beginning but continually became a part of him and finally the official had a distanced view on one application, out of many, that turned out to be successful. How could one interpret these stories and what do they tell us about “the management of a project and the relationships in a network”?

A Relational Perspective

Our way of viewing the structures and processes that all kind of organizing consists of is ruled by our ontological standpoint. There have been two predominant paradigms in the western society; a collective and an individualistic paradigm. In between these two you can place a third paradigm namely a relational paradigm.¹³ That means viewing the individual and society as processes of relations. Individuals and groups as well as organizations are not autonomous and fixed entities rather they are constantly coming into being, constantly interacting¹⁴. Using a

relational perspective when studying organisational processes means that you focus on what goes on *between* individuals rather than on intra psychological or individual processes¹⁵. It is of course a rather big challenge to introduce a relational perspective in such an individualistic field like the arts, where schools, styles and sometimes personal cults are built around special persons, often considered as heroes having outstanding traits and qualities¹⁶. However art fields and creative environments are developed in certain atmospheres of “zeitgeist”, values and attitudes that of course influence even the geniuses¹⁷. And even contemporary artists, curators, critics and collectors today talk about relational aesthetics¹⁸.

One of the features of the management of trans-national projects is that people do not actually meet very often. Contacts are made by mail and in this case on nobody's own mother tongue. There are many occasions where misunderstandings can occur because of language problems or cultural differences. The network is dependent on the good will of the members, and their anticipations. In order to create not virtual but real ‘in-between’ relations the members of this network met for a couple of days in the beginning of the project, in order to get to know each other and to construct a “frame and a structure” for the network or – to ‘make sense’ of the network together.

According to the Swedish social-anthropologist Johan Asplund¹⁹, the human being is ‘socially responsive’, i.e. people get their identity and are created through their interaction with each other. We actually create each other all the time. But there are also situations where the self or the other is of no interest, when it is not people who meet – rather it is different roles meeting. These are formal, complex and socially advanced contexts where people play the role of an abstract member of a society or organization. This has been explained by the early sociologist Tönnies as the shift from “Gemeinschaft” to “Gesellschaft”²⁰. In the stories above we can see that the project leader would have liked the EU-people having seen and even experienced the Network Baltic project like a process of meetings with artists, academics and visitors and not as application no x in the books of a bureaucrat in Brussels, while the CCP official never reflected over this abstraction process, since he is working in the bureaucratic context.

The Identity of a Project

Relationships build on the principle of *dialogue* and *communication*. They develop in a practical situation of people simultaneously interpreting and creating both their own self-insight and their idea of their organizations and projects. Czarniawska (1998, p 29) claims that organisations are “institutionalized action nets”. There are several such action nets present in the narratives above. The Network Baltic-project and its partners, the CCP office and the Culture2000 office in Brussels. These organisations develop their own identity to which their members contribute. The identity of a project is built on schemes of interpretation, categorization and expected action²¹. And in a trans-national network these expectations and interpretations can differ a lot. Inter organizational networks are usually successful in transforming and transferring new knowledge, but they also seem to construct continuous standardization of different processes and dependencies.²²

Neo-institutional theory has focused on the concept of standardization.²³ How do the ideas of a good project, a good application and artistic quality travel? What kind of processes and regulations are the actors of the organizations above part of? There are three kinds of rules according to the theorists: directives, norms and standards.²⁴ Directives are explicit rules, they are coercive and have an obvious sender. Norms are implicit and has seldom a clear author and following the norm is mostly an inner compulsion, norms are internalised. Standards on the other hand are explicit and have an obvious sender but they are voluntary and do not lead to

sanctions. Standards also differ from the traditional types of isomorphism: coercive, mimetic and normative. Typical standard setting institutions are ISO, the OECD and also the EU. In the stories above the CCP official is giving examples of how the Culture2000 committee with different directives makes the projects truly European. The partners have to invest money into the project and their role has to be explicitly explained, the budget has to be balanced and the project should be extremely well planned. The narratives of the project leader and applicant on the other hand concerns norms and standards. On one hand they do not want to make a project that satisfies the EU and is made to fit into its criteria and objectives (standards) – on the other hand they know that in some extent they have to shape the project in order to make the committee and the jury satisfied. And these expectations on “what the committee/jury wants” one can find both explicit (standards) and implicit (norms) in the application guidelines, concerning the aims, the partners, the length and the finances. The person who found it most difficult to adapt to the application was the project leader – because the reality seldom fits with the plans. And as a leader of a project you are also the creator of a project – you should be able to lead it in a creative way, but this is not possible in the EU-project, which ironically should “promote creativity” according to the objectives. In a relational perspective the identity of a project is, not inherent in the objectives of an application or in the minds of its manager, leaders or artists, it is continuously created by its actors and its context. The question is, what kind of identity do all the standards, directives and norms given and created by foundations and institutions, foster and do they create standardized, uniformed, ‘typical’ art projects? Or is there a way to make the projects into living art processes?

The Translation of Bureaucracy

One way to explain how projects or organizations create manoeuvre space and possibilities to conceptualize their own work is by the process of translation. This process is seen as an active continual process of interpreting the regulations, norms and standards that surrounds the organization. Local actors and agents usually are given different possibilities to interpret and influence their everyday life by different institutions²⁵. According to the project leader above the Culture2000 committee and the application procedures give small possibilities to translate a project according to changing conditions. Still he is explaining how he and the artistic leader “sat down for three days to make this project their own”. He is also conscious about the fact the project from the beginning was translated into the Culture2000 application guidelines with competent help from a sanctioned translator, i.e. the CCP official. He on his hand tells the applicants “what kind of problems there are and what is important to think about” planning a project and writing an application.

The translation process is neither a process of imitation nor of invention. There are certain rules and norms you have to follow but you can do that in a creative way. To a certain extent you have to improvise in all kinds of projects in order to realize them in a living world and changing environment. The project leader wished that the Culture2000 committee would have been more open to that kind of improvising – although he never actually pushed them. He did not ask for a renegotiation, probably because he did not expect it to happen. According to the early organization theorist Mary Parker Follett there are three ways to handle a conflict – which does not mean a combat rather a situation of differing interpretations of a given situation²⁶. These are domination, compromise and integration. Dominating means that one party is dictating orders or directives for the other party, which is quite usual in a bureaucracy. The second way of dealing with conflicts is to compromise, which means that both parties have to sacrifice something while the third way is a true creative process, according to Follet. That means to discover or invent something new – a third way. But in order to integrate the parties must meet and listen and talk

to each other and maybe even try to take the perspective of the other and risk the conceptions of ones own.

“Success in integrative negotiation is achieved when parties can identify their respective interest and revalue them in light of the other’s response, so that both can see where their interests fit into each other and that all may find some place in the final solutions.”²⁷

When the translation is done separately, without interaction or relating, inventions will hardly take place. Rather the relation will be asymmetrical and the powerful part (usually the one with the money) could be the authority that strangles the creativity it once wanted to support.

Conclusion

In this paper I have discussed what the practical consequences of EU regulations and standards for the management of cultural projects can look like. Cultural projects are often run with extremely creative people, but the management of the project tend to be more and more trapped. This is due both to rigorous regulations and more or less conscious standards and norms. Interesting questions are:

What kind of consequences do applications to foundations have on the way art projects are run and on the diversity and creativity of the artistic work? Is it possible to regulate diversity and creativity?

One way of understanding how the art managers make sense of the regulations put up by foundations is the process of translation. In order to make the project their own and fit it into their own context (not the political context of the foundation) they have to translate the standards and norms into their own discourse and reality. This is done through communication, dialogues and meeting with people. The managers have to be able to take part in several discourses and make sense of these to others as well. Here an interesting question is: Do the narratives and the discourse in the joint cultural projects develop a European cultural project identity or style?

Notes

- ¹ Appeal by the cultural world. (www.on-the-move.org/artistappeal/letter.html 2004-10-10)
- ² Czarniawska 1998 p 13-14.
- ³ http://europa.eu.int/comm/culture/eac/sources_info/official_doc/article151_en.html
- ⁴ EU-stöd till kultur. 2002
- ⁵ The Magazine – Education and Culture in Europe Issue 21, 2003.
- ⁶ These areas have another program– MEDIA PLUS 2001-2005.
- ⁷ See http://europa.eu.int/comm/culture/eac/culture2000/cult_2000_en.html for further information and regulations about the Culture2000 programme.
- ⁸ R Mitchell 2003, p 450.
- ⁹ Franzen 2002.
- ¹⁰ Mc Guigan 2004, p 35.
- ¹¹ ibid. p 50.
- ¹² Alvesson & Köping 1993, Potter & Wetherell 1992.
- ¹³ Liedman 2001.
- ¹⁴ Follett 1924, Hosking, Dachler & Gergen 1995, Koivunen 2003, Köping 2003, Soila-Wadman 2003.
- ¹⁵ Goffman 1967
- ¹⁶ Soila-Wadman & Köping 2005.
- ¹⁷ Csikszentmihaly 2001.
- ¹⁸ Bourriaud 2002.
- ¹⁹ Asplund 1987
- ²⁰ Asplund 1990.
- ²¹ Brunsson & Jacobsson 1998 in Johansson s 143
- ²² Sjöstrand 2004.
- ²³ This section builds on Johansson 2002.
- ²⁴ Brunsson & Jacobsson 1998.
- ²⁵ Johansson 2002.
- ²⁶ In Kolb & al 1996.
- ²⁷ Ibid p. 154.

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